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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY 6382
INFO RUEHSI/AMEMBASSY TBILISI 9258
RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA 4210

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 126999

SIPDIS
EMBASSY FOR DOE AND EST

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/02/2018
TAGS: [ENRG](#) [IAEA](#) [KNNP](#) [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [GG](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: SEEKING RUSSIAN UPDATE ON SUKHUMI RADIOACTIVE
SOURCES

REF: A. MOSCOW 3431
[B](#). TBILISI 2172
[C](#). 07 STATE 178386

Classified By: Anita Friedt
for Reasons 1.4 B and D.

[1](#). (C) Background: As outlined in Ref C, Washington has long been concerned about the possible existence of improperly secured, highly radioactive sources in Sukhumi, Abkhazia. We worked with the Georgian and Russian governments and the IAEA over the past few years to seek the removal of these sources to secure storage, probably in Russia. We had reached tentative agreement with the GOR that it would remove these sources at its expense to secure storage in Russia. The Russians were supposed to send a letter to the GOG proposing this solution, but the letter was never sent. We understand that it was blocked by the MFA at Deputy Foreign Minister Kislyak,s level.

[2](#). (C) The Russia-Georgia conflict and associated sovereignty issues complicate this matter significantly. We must not take any actions which could be used by the GOR to legitimize the independence of Abkhazia. Before we decide upon a new strategy to get the sources removed to secure storage, we want to make sure that we have a full and accurate understanding of the dimensions of the problem. As per ref B, Georgian officials have expressed willingness for Russia to remove the sources from Sukhumi to safe storage in Russia. Given the sensitivity of this issue, Washington believes that initial efforts to gain updated information on the sources (ref A) will require reinforcement.

[3](#). (C) Action request: Washington requests that Embassy approach, at the highest possible level, appropriate ROSATOM and MFA officials to seek the following information:

- confirmation that the sources are still in Abkhazia, i.e., that they have not been removed to Russia at any time (prior to or after the Aug 08 conflict);
- details on the number of sources located in Sukhumi or elsewhere in Abkhazia and their radioactivity levels
- identify the type of sources present (i.e. cesium-137 or cobalt-60), and
- what the GOR plans to do about these sources.

[4](#). (U) Post assistance is appreciated. Please slug responses for ISN/WMDT, EUR/PRA, EUR/RUS, and EUR/CARC.
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